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Dianne Wampler 12/05/2006 01:18:25 AM From DB/Inbox: Dianne Wampler

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Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L

ANKARA 06568

SIPDIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 006568

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/03/2016

TAGS: PREL EUN TU

SUBJECT: SENIOR TURKS GIVE UPDATE ON EU TALKS

REF: ANKARA 6391 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROSS WILSON FOR REASON 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (c) Summary: Turkey may be considering additional steps on the Cyprus/ports issue in its negotiations with the European Union, FM Gul, Deputy U/S Apakan and PM/FM foreign affairs advisor Davutoglu told Ambassador in separate conversations December 2 and 4. The Turks complained about the European Commission's recommendations, especially that eight chapters are suspended, no chapters are closed, and that matters are reviewed at a later date. They noted that several of the chapters selected for suspension have nothing to do with Turkey-EU Customs Union, the extension of which to Cyprus is at issue. Gul emphasized the government's commitment to domestic reform, including of Article 301, and highlighted the positive role that EU pressure has, but held out no hope of serious action on this agenda before the GAERC meets December 11-12. The Turks appealed for continued US efforts, including especially with Cyprus and Greece. Ambassador reviewed what the US is telling the Europeans, encouraged possible new Turkish ideas on Cyprus/ports, pushed for Talat to be more forthcoming with Papadopoulos, and urged that the GOT give priority to the positives in the EU's ultimate decision, rather than the negatives. End Summary.

¶2. (c) Gul complained that the fundamental problem is that Cyprus and Greece want to push a Cyprus-exclusive agenda with Turkey and others are using Cyprus as cover for an anti-Turkish stance they are otherwise reluctant to express openly. He expressed concern about the "increasingly negative" stances of German Chancellor Merkel and Greek FM Bakoyannis. (Gul's staff separately advised that the decision not to go ahead with the FM's visit to Athens, originally planned for this week, is now final and was made because of her unhelpful actions and statements.) The Baltics are not as helpful or vocal as they might be in light of Turkey's role in providing NATO air cover for them and its decades-long policy of not recognizing the Baltics' incorporation into the USSR. He and Apakan cited as being

helpful the UK, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the Czech Republic.

¶13. (c) The Turks said they were surprised and disappointed by the European Commission's recommendations. Apakan said the German ambassador had phoned over the weekend to ask if the Turks were pleased with the outcome; Apakan had responded that the Germans were dead wrong to think that the EC's outcome was good. All the Turks complained that suspending eight chapters is too many. The Turkey-EU Customs Union that should be implemented with Cyprus and other new members deals only with trade in goods. Three chapters are relevant to that, but suspending or freezing chapters that deal with services, external relations and other matters not associated with trade in goods is unjustified and makes no sense. It sends an awful signal to Turkish public opinion.

¶14. (c) The Turks also worried that unsuspended chapters might also not open due to Cypriot or other obstructionism and complained bitterly about the possibility that these chapters might not be allowed to close until Cyprus issues are resolved. The dynamics resulting from this kind of EU statement will further undermine public interest here in EU accession and slow down the very reform process the EU wants to accelerate, Gul complained. While all the Turks were worried about a possible "review mechanism" in 18-24 months time, Gul said bluntly that anything like an ultimatum to Turkey that it must open its ports to Cyprus by some specified time frame or face xyz consequences will cause Turkey to walk away now.

¶15. (c) Gul and Apakan referred to confidential and evidently preliminary discussions on possible new Turkish ideas on ports and trade with Cyprus. UK PM Blair had asked for new Turkish ideas; the Finnish PM who visited here December 1 apparently did likewise; and the German ambassador was also appealing for some Turkish initiative on Cyprus/ports, according to Apakan. Asked what is being considered, the Turks would say only that the elements are those previously discussed with the Finns, but probably as a smaller package (for example, without Varosha). Apakan said that political-level decisions will be made very shortly and promised to advise us when Turkey goes back to the British, Finns and Germans.

¶16. (c) Ambassador reiterated the strong support for Turkey's EU efforts articulated by the President with PM Erdogan in early October, which the Turks also saw reflected in US diplomacy on the margins of the Riga NATO Summit. He outlined what we will be saying to the Europeans regarding measures they may decide upon: a minimum number of chapters should be affected by a decision to freeze or suspend; other chapters should be allowed to open without additional commitments by Turkey; there should be no ultimatums to Turkey; and no measures should be taken that would undermine prospects for a Cyprus settlement. For Turkey, Ambassador had four messages:

-- we encourage any new ideas about Cyprus/ports issues and urge they be put forward ASAP;

-- movement on domestic reform issues, especially 301, could be very helpful in turning EU opinion and would help in the US as well;

-- though unrelated to the EU per se, Talat should respond favorably to UN Deputy SYG Gambari and signal his readiness to meet Papadopoulos; and

-- when the EU is finished and despite what is likely to be a package not entirely satisfying to Turkey, the GOT should find ways to react positively, stressing for example that currently frozen accession talks can go forward in many relevant areas.

¶17. (c) The Turks expressed appreciation for our help with the Europeans, including the President's efforts in Riga and our key messages now. Gul said that domestic reform will

continue because Turkey wants it to continue, but that the external stimulus of the EU is helpful. A Turkey-EU negotiation that is open ended and not aimed clearly at the closing of chapters and ultimate accession will drain that stimulus of needed energy. Regarding Article 301, he said the government will fix it (no time frame provided).

Davutoglu rejected the idea of trying to spin the EU's decision in the most positive way. His emotion betrayed the intense pressure the government feels, boxed between and among the EU, the military, an extremely unhelpful opposition, and a disinterested public opinion on the eve of an election year.

¶18. (c) On Cyprus per se, Apakan said that Talat has responded positively to Gambari's letter and has indicated he is prepared to meet with Papadopoulos to speed things along, but did not do so publicly. Apakan undertook to make that happen.

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